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## THE VALUE OF BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WIDENING THE GEOGRAPHICAL HORIZON

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HAZEL E. KOCH  
High School, Rockford, Illinois

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In discussing the purposes of literature teaching, the Committee on the Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools mentions the value of taking the pupil out of his own local group, out of his small environment limited as to time and place, and showing to him the world with its actors both past and present. In short, one purpose, as discussed there, is to widen the geographical and historical horizon. As stated in the report of this committee, the following is one of the special purposes of literature:

To broaden the mental experience by supplying a sympathetic acquaintance with scenes in various geographical sections, and with historical periods of the world. This has two distinct values: (1) Psychologically it forms centers of apperception about which fresh facts will tend to gather in the future, the process being vitalized by the human interest attaching to the central historical or fictional figures; and (2) by the presentation of persons acting in accordance with the demands of conditions new to the pupil, an attack is made early in the educative process upon the tendency toward a merely local or provincial outlook upon life.

The purpose of the present investigation was to find out the extent to which the books recommended by English departments in high schools are satisfactory tools for the realization of the aim as just stated. This paper concerns itself only with the first part of the aim; that is, the broadening of "the mental experience by supplying a sympathetic acquaintance with scenes in various geographical sections."

Broadening the geographical horizon is, in the light of modern interpretation of the objectives of education, surely a sound and necessary aim for the reading work. We have reached a period in the development of civilization where, through the perfection of

mechanical devices, distance on the globe has become a negligible quantity. We know tonight what happened anywhere in the world this morning. We can get to that point in a comparatively short time. We are no longer a provincial group cut off from communication with our fellow-beings in other parts of the world. We are talking about national brotherhood and world peace; but world-brotherhood, peace, and friendship are impossible without understanding and complete knowledge. If we had unlimited time and means at our disposal, if we had many lives to live, we could live for a time with all the different groups of the world. Then we might be said to know them, and then we could feel the real tie of brotherhood.

However, actual participation in the lives of various peoples of the earth is impossible, but vicarious participation is certainly within our reach. Through books and reading we may live where and among the peoples we please. It is the best means we have of going beyond our home environment. Mrs. Stowe thought it might be interesting and instructive for people to live the life of the southern slave, so she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. For the few hours it takes to read it, and ever afterward at will, one can live the life of Uncle Tom and his slave brothers. As we read or think of the *Call of the Wild*, *Captains Courageous*, or *Kim* we find our understanding and sympathy extended to include the environment.

Since this is true, the kind of books recommended for reading in high schools is tremendously important. High-school students should develop a feeling of large group consciousness, of social oneness, of international brotherhood, and the best means of doing this is to broaden the geographical horizon through the reading of books portraying all of the different parts of the globe.

In order to find out just what the high-school students of the country were reading and to what extent the reading matter actually broadened the horizon, thirty-five reading lists and courses of study were collected from prominent and representative high schools in all sections of the United States. One composite list was made of every book mentioned in the thirty-five lists, with its frequency of occurrence. This list had a total of 4,025 different books.

All books having a frequency of fifteen or more were listed separately. This resulted in a list of ninety-seven books very generally read in the high schools of the United States. These were studied carefully for geographical material.

Nine of the ninety-seven books had no geographical significance at all. Forty of them pictured the United States, twenty-six England, five France, four Canada, three Scotland, two Italy, and two Palestine. One book of travel furnished brief glimpses of Europe. Alaska, Germany, India, Persia, and Spain each had one book respectively, while Ireland, Sweden, Russia, Japan, and China, to mention only a few of the omissions, were not revealed at all.

A summary glance at the places included in the ninety-seven most frequently mentioned books leads to the conclusion that they picture the United States adequately, England rather completely, Scotland fairly well, France fairly well, and Palestine reasonably well. India is described very well in the one book that pictures it, but the proportion of books devoted to it is not sufficiently large. There is too great a chance with only one book concerning a country that that one book will not be chosen, and hence the pupil will remain unacquainted with the region described by it. Frequency, other things being equal, should probably be in proportion to the geographical importance of the country.

Other countries are not pictured at all, or they are very inadequately pictured.

Nearly one-half of the books are books with an American background, and nearly one-third of the books picture England. Other countries receive a very meager treatment or are omitted altogether. This indicates the fostering of a provincial, small-group attitude. It suggests that while we talk of the development of cosmopolitanism, of world-group consciousness, we are really cheating ourselves. We like to think we are developing a wider outlook, and the statement of one aim is devoted to it in the course of study for English, but the books which are commonly recommended are not chosen with the accomplishment of that end in view.

On account of limited space a summary only will be presented in the case of the entire composite list.

It is found that there are 198 books laid in the United States, thirty-three of them based on the East, twenty-four on the Middle West, forty-two on New England, forty-one on the South, and fifty-eight on the West. These are distributed with such evenness that all sections of the country seem to be fairly well described.

The Far North (in most cases this means Alaska) is represented by twenty-five books. Since London and Service are prominent in this list, the delineation of that region may be said to be accurate and adequate.

Canada apparently has only eight books to her credit, a very inadequate number considering the size of the country and its wealth of interesting material. The majority of these eight books, too, are concerned with only one section of the country, Labrador, and are usually connected in some way with the work of Dr. Grenfell.

Mexico has only seven books, and these seven are mentioned less than six times each, indicating that there is no widespread interest in that near neighbor. How far these books give an adequate revelation of the country it is impossible to say. Certainly, for reasons of international and sociological import it is most important that America become better acquainted with Mexico. Seven books, infrequently mentioned, certainly furnish an inadequate basis for such an acquaintance.

England, as was discovered by an analysis of only the books most frequently mentioned, is adequately taken care of.

France, Belgium, and Holland together have a representation of ninety books, a large number of them being war books. These latter are not very satisfactory or valuable as geographical revelations, as in most cases they merely picture the trenches, the men holding them, and their life and death. The countries themselves are described with only fair accuracy.

Italy has thirty-seven books which are mentioned less than six times. This indicates an inadequate treatment of that country. If these thirty-seven books truly represent Italy, they should be more generally recommended.

Ireland seems to have only six books interested in her. Moreover, some of these do not in any way reveal the country even though they are, technically speaking, laid there, which makes the

situation still more serious. Poor Ireland! Perhaps if it were more thoroughly understood, some of the difficulties connected with it would disappear.

Germany has only three books, and one of them is useless geographically. That is, of course, a deplorable situation. No doubt war prejudice has something to do with it but the situation needs remedying.

Poland has two books and Switzerland one, a condition obviously unsatisfactory.

Russia seems to have only fourteen books to her credit, thirteen of them being mentioned less than six times. These books may be adequate as far as they go, but they are not mentioned with sufficient frequency to reach many of the students.

South America has only seven books, a meager and unsatisfactory showing when we consider our aspirations to trade with her. Successful commercial relations are impossible when there is no understanding and, so far as the list shows, no interest.

In addition to the books already mentioned we have, of course, several books of travel insufficiently localized to be classified with any particular country. These books of travel furnish valuable material and must be thought of as supplementing the ideas of practically all the countries mentioned.

The results of the geographical investigation might be summed up as follows: (1) The United States, in all sections, is revealed with entire adequacy. (2) England is satisfactorily pictured. (3) Scotland is fairly well described. (4) France and Canada are not so well revealed. (5) Greece, Italy, Russia, Sweden and Norway, Spain, Palestine, and India need more general and frequent attention. (6) Other parts of the globe receive entirely inadequate treatment.

This situation challenges the statement of any aim such as that of attempting to broaden the child through mental experience in various geographical sections of the world. If it is a legitimate aim, as is assumed, and if it is worth stating in the course of study, why is so little effort made to meet it? Is it because English departments are bound by custom in the books they select? Is it because they are over-conservative? Or are there really no books

concerning these countries that would be suitable to give to high-school students? An answer to the last question can be found only in an exhaustive and careful study of the literatures of the world.

A study of the literatures of the world may reveal considerable material on some countries which will be very suitable for use on these reading lists after it is translated. Such material, adequate as to literary form, moral tone, etc., should be seized and incorporated into the book lists. Again, for certain other countries, nothing at all may be found. It may be necessary in such cases to supplement the situation by material of a didactic nature. In the meantime, perhaps it will be necessary to call for authors to produce the other type of thing, for the interesting and normal way of seeing and knowing a country is to know it as a background for the drama of human action. Always the English teacher must be on the alert to discover any new material which may be added to the lists to help in the realization of the objectives of education and in particular those of reading.

It is suggested, then, that there should be a revision of the reading lists recommended by English departments in high schools with the definite purpose of making possible the realization of the objective of widening the pupil's geographical consciousness. To do this it is necessary to make a careful study of existing literature on various parts of the world; to incorporate into the reading lists any suitable literature which is found to reveal various countries that are inadequately treated at the present; to be on the alert for the discovery of all new and available material as it appears; to ask for material to be prepared where it does not seem to exist; and to realize to the full the importance of broadening the pupil's geographical horizon.